

REMARKS

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's acceptance of their Request for Continued Examination dated January 12, 2004, and the withdrawal of finality of the Office Action mailed November 25, 2003.

Claims 1-20 are currently pending in the application. The Specification has been amended to correct an informality by changing "a" to "an" at page 3, line 6. No new matter is added.

The Claimed Invention

The claimed invention concerns a rental car system in which cars are operated by digital keys instead of conventional keys. It is commonplace in rental car systems for car keys to be left in cars when cars are waiting to be picked up by customers and when cars are dropped off by customers when the rental period is over. As a result, keys are vulnerable to theft or copying which would, for example, enable a criminal to follow a rental car when it leaves the parking lot and steal it when it is unattended. The claimed invention, therefore, seeks to provide a means of securing a vehicle in a car rental system which does not use conventional car keys. The claimed invention also seeks to provide such a security for rental cars in a manner that does not require data communication between cars and a central station to determine whether an operator is authorized to use the car. The claimed invention further seeks to provide such a security system for rental cars without necessitating reprogramming of a card reader built into a rental car (or other preprocessing) to be done for each new rental transaction. Thus, according to the claimed invention, cars of a car rental system are to be secured by providing a digital key issued by the car rental system, which is to be presented before a rental car may be operated. Objects of the claimed invention include *inter alia* how to provide such digital keys in a manner that does not require either data communication between a rental car and a central station or transaction-by-transaction reprogramming of a rental car's reader.

The claimed invention includes a computing system 10, a portable storage device 12, and an access control device 14 with an interface 16 to a portable storage inside a rental car 160. The computing system 10 is used to make reservations and to create and store the digital keys used to enable operation of a rental cars 160. Such computing system 10 may be of various types, including (without limitation) a terminal located in a kiosk 140 at a car rental agency or a personal computer 130 located at a home, office or other location. In either case, such computer system 10 is to be capable of connecting to the central reservation server 110 via a network 120, which may be the Internet. The computing system 10 may be provided with means to download a digital key to a portable storage device 12. Such portable storage device may take the form of a smart card issued by the car rental agency, a personal digital assistant, a memory card, or a diskette. The digital key may specify the starting date and time of a given rental transaction, as well as the identification of the car for which the key is provided. The digital key may be signed by the car rental system for authenticity and may include information, such as a personal identification number known only to the renter, to prevent a lost digital key from being used by unauthorized persons. A renter may thus bring a portable storage device 12 containing a digital key to a rental car 160 equipped with an access control device 14 capable of reading the digital key from the portable storage device 12 and, upon authentication of the digital key by the access control device, enable operation of the rental car 160. Upon returning the rental car 160, the car invalidates the digital key so that it can no longer be used to operate the car, and the renter may present the invalidated digital key to a central station of the car rental system. The renter may be held liable for the rental car until the invalidated digital key is presented to a central station of the car rental system at the conclusion of the rental period. Since the in-car controller is able to decipher authorization information from a digital key, there is no need to reprogram the in-car controller for the next renter.

The Examiner has rejected Claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,253,980 to Murakami et al. in view of U.S. Published Patent

Application No. 2002/0022979 to Whipp et al. and further in view of U.S. Published Patent Applicant No. 2003/0206117 to Rosenberg et al. Applicants respectfully traverse such rejection on the basis that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al. and Rosenberg et al. would not result in the claimed invention. Applicants also respectfully traverse on the basis that Murakami et al., Whipp et al. and Rosenberg et al., in many significant respects, do not appear to stand for the points on which they have been offered by the Examiner. These traversals are discussed more fully below.

Rejection of Claims 1-20

The Examiner has rejected Claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Murakami et al. in view of Whipp et al. and further in view of Rosenberg et al. As discussed by Applicants in response to the previous office action, both Murakami et al. and Whipp et al. teach that it is essential to have a data link between rental cars and a central station, so that a central station can provide ID authentication at the rental car. (Murakami et al., column 12, lines 23-67; Whipp et al., Figure 1, 0026 and 0061) Murakami et al. and Whipp et al. do not teach any way to provide authentication without such a data link. Because a data link is essential in both Murakami et al. and Whipp et al., no conceivable combination of Murakami et al. and Whipp et al. could produce the claimed invention. The Examiner has raised Rosenberg et al. to up for the deficiencies of Murakami et al. and Whipp et al. Unlike Murakami et al. and Whipp et al., Rosenberg et al. was not raised by the Examiner in previous office actions. Applicant respectfully submits that Rosenberg et al. does not teach how a digital key can be validated without a data link, or otherwise provide essential features missing from Murakami et al. and Whipp et al..

As discussed in connection with Claim 1, below, while the system of Rosenberg et al. may be employed in a manner that eliminates need for the communication between a *vehicle location system control center* and a *central computer*, Rosenberg et al. does not eliminate the need for communication *from the car to a central computer*. To the contrary, Rosenberg et al. requires a data link between the car and a central station to

determine whether the driver is authorized to use the car. The system of Rosenberg requires a driver to choose either (a) to activate “the signal which starts the operation of the VLU [vehicle locator unit] [and which] will also cause the central computer to be placed in information exchange connection with the vehicle location control center” or (b) to “communicate to the central computer a parking code continuing identification to the parking zone, as herein described, and in this case there will be no need for exchange of information between the vehicle location system control center and the central computer.” (Rosenberg et al., Paragraph 0071) The system of Rosenberg et al. does not, in either case, provide access control for a driver to operate a vehicle without initiating some form of data communication between the car and a central station external to the car in order to determine whether an operator is authorized to use the car.

Applicants thus respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in the claimed invention. Additional support is provided below.

Claim 1. With regard to Claim 1, the Examiner has characterized Murakami et al. as disclosing “a car rental system comprising: a fleet of cars, each of which is operable only when a valid digital key is presented to the car, and each of said fleet of cars has a means to invalidate a digital key (See Murakami, lines 29-67 to Col. 7, line 63; Col. 11, lines 5-57).” (Office Action at 2-3) The cited passages from Murakami et al., however, do not describe a digital key which may be invalidated after each car rental transaction but instead describe use of “user identification information, for example, read from a card key 21, smart card or other machine-readable method of identification.” (Murakami et al., column 7, lines 3-7) Murakami et al. appears to discuss a form of user identification that persists from transaction to transaction, in large part because the disclosure of Murakami et al. is not directed to a conventional car rental system but is instead directed to a “shared vehicle system” which provides collective control over a fleet of cars (preferably electric cars) to “subscribers” as an alternative to individual control of “private vehicles” in everyday use. (Murakami et al., column 1 at lines 57 – column 2,

line 4) Thus, Murakami et al. contemplates a system that will compile a “statistical analysis of vehicle use patterns” of each subscriber for use in allocating vehicles on an as-needed basis. (Murakami et al., column 6, lines 59-60) The claimed invention, by contrast, addresses the problem of how, in a conventional rental car system, digital keys may be provided in a manner that does not require either a data link between a rental car and a central station or transaction-by-transaction reprogramming of a rental car’s reader. (Specification, page 2, lines 15-20)

The Examiner has also characterized the claimed invention as disclosing “a management system for handling reservation and car return . . . (See Murakami et al., Col. 5, lines 57-67 to Col. 6, line 28).” (Office Action at 3) Claim 1, however, contemplates a conventional car rental system while the cited passage from Murakami et al. discusses a shared vehicle system in which subscribers collectively share a fleet of vehicles (expected to include electric vehicles):

To successfully attract people to subscribe and become users of a shared vehicle system, the system must be sufficiently convenient and inexpensive. More particularly, users should be able to pick up a vehicle at a convenient location and with minimal or no waiting time.

(Murakami et al., column 6, lines 1-5) Again, the disclosure of Murakami et al. appears to be directed to providing a solution to a problem that is different from the problems addressed by the claimed invention.

The Examiner, recognizing that “Murakami does not explicitly disclose a key generation system for generating digital keys for renters of the car rental system [or] a key return system for processing digital keys returned by renters” (Office Action at 3), relies on Whipp et al. to make up for the deficiency. The Examiner characterizes Whipp et al. as “suggest[ing] a key generation system for generating digital keys for renters of the car rental system (See Whipp, Page 3, Paragraphs 0025-0029; Page 5, Paragraphs 0050-0053).” (Office Action at 3) Applicants respectfully submit, however, that the disclosure of Whipp et al. does not stand for the points on which it has been offered by

the Examiner. According to the disclosure of Whipp et al.:

The present invention further provides a method for releasing a vehicle to one of a plurality of different users, including: receiving data by a user located outside the vehicle through an interactive interface including a touch screen into a local computer located inside the vehicle; communicating the data entered into the local computer to a centralized data management system remotely located relative to the vehicle; selectively issuing an authorization for release of the vehicle to the user from the centralized data management system in response to the data entered by the user; communicating the authorization from the centralized data management system to the local computer; and automatically unlocking the vehicle and facilitating its starting in response to the authorization received by the local computer from the centralized data management system.

(Whipp et al., Paragraph 0027) Whipp et al. does not describe a digital key as used in the claimed invention, since the system contemplated by Whipp et al. is not capable of releasing a car to an operator without the car's first obtaining "authorization from the centralized data management system." In addition, while use of the authorization system of Whipp et al. requires contact between the vehicle to be rented and a centralized data system, "[g]enerally, once rented, vehicles 12 will not contact the data system 14 until termination of the lease unless an emergency occurs." (Whipp et al., Paragraph 0050) The claimed invention, by contrast, contemplates that the digital key may be employed by the operator to activate the car at any time throughout the rental period. (Specification, page 3, lines 4-11)

The Examiner further characterized Whipp et al. as providing "a key return system for processing digital keys returned by renters (See Whipp, Page 3, Paragraphs 0025-0029; Page 5, Paragraphs 0050-0053)." (Office Action at 3) Applicants, however, have not been able to identify language in the paragraphs of Whipp et al. cited by the Examiner suggesting "a key return system for processing digital keys returned by renters" comparable to what is described in Claim 1. Applicants thus

respectfully submit that this is another instance in which the disclosure of Whipp et al. does not stand for the points on which it has been offered by the Examiner.

The Examiner, recognizing that Murakami et al. and Whipp et al. do not contemplate the limitation of Claim 1, "wherein there exists no data communication link between the first fleet of cars and the management system," relies on Rosenberg et al. to make up for the deficiency. (Office Action at 3) Applicants respectfully suggest, as discussed above, that the Examiner has misapprehended Rosenberg et al. in this regard.

While it appears to be the case that the system of Rosenberg et al. may be employed in a manner that eliminates need for communication between a *vehicle location system control center* and a *central computer*, it is clear that Rosenberg et al. does not eliminate the need for communication *from the car to a central computer*. To the contrary, the disclosure of Rosenberg et al. *would require data communication between a driver and a central computer* to initiate a data link involving a central station to determine whether the driver is authorized to use the car:

[I]f the VLU [vehicle location unit] is activated by the driver only for purposes of starting a parking procedure and only at the moment of parking, the same operational phases may take place, viz. the signal which starts the operation of the VLU will also cause the central computer to be placed in information exchange connection with the vehicle location control center; however, alternatively the driver may communicate to the central computer a parking code continuing identification to the parking zone, as herein described, and in this case there will be no need for exchange of information between the vehicle location system control center and the central computer.

(Rosenberg et al., Paragraph 0071; *see also* Rosenberg et al., Paragraph 0199 and Figures 1-7) Thus, the system of Rosenberg et al. provides that a driver may either (a) cause a central computer be put in communication with a vehicle location control center or (b) cause a parking code associated with a vehicle's current parking location to be communicated to a central computer. The system of Rosenberg et al. does not provide

access control for a driver to operate a vehicle without initiating some form of data communication involving a central station external to the car in order to determine whether an operator is authorized to use the car. Claim 1 of the claimed invention, by contrast, enables the digital key to work without initiating a data link or other communication external to the car.

Applicants thus respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 1 of the claimed invention.

Claim 2. With regard to Claim 2, which depends from Claim 1, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claim 1 by reference. In addition, the Examiner has characterized Whipp et al. as disclosing “the system further comprising a parking lot guarded by a security gate, said fleet of card being parked within confines of said parking lot when not rented by a renter of the car rental system, said security gate only opening when a valid digital pass is presented by a renter of the car rental system (Page 6, Paragraph 0062-0064).” (Office Action at 4) The cited passage of Whipp et al., however, does not make use of the term “digital pass.” In view of the fact that the system in Whipp et al. does not operate without a data link to the outside, while the ability to operate without such a data link is a principal object of the claimed invention, the cited passage of Whipp et al. does not appear to contemplate Claim 2. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 2 of the claimed invention.

Claim 3. With regard to Claim 3, which depends from Claim 1, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claim 1 by reference. In addition, the Examiner has characterized Whipp et al. as disclosing a system “wherein the management system is accessed by a prospective renter over a network and the prospective renter is given a digital key to operate a particular car and a digital pass to open the gate of the parking lot where said particular car is parked, after said prospective renter completes a reservation for said particular car, said digital key and digital pass being effective starting from the time specified by said reservation (Page 5, Paragraph 0050-0054).” (Office

Action at 4) As discussed in connection with Claims 1 and 2, however, there does not appear to be a basis for finding the digital key or digital pass of the claimed invention to be contemplated by or analogous to features discussed by Whipp et al. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 3 of the claimed invention.

Claim 4. With regard to Claim 4, which depends from Claims 1 and 3, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claims 1 and 3 by reference. In addition, the Examiner has characterized Murakami et al. as disclosing a system “wherein the prospective renter accesses the management system at a kiosk located in the parking lot where the particular car is parked (Col. 17, lines 14-67).” (Office Action at 5) As noted in connection with the discussion of Claim 1, however, Murakami et al., is directed to a system in which “subscribers” are collectively sharing a fleet of vehicles (expected to include electric vehicles) and not to a conventional reservation-based car rental system such as the one contemplated by the claimed invention. (Murakami et al., column 6, lines 1-5) For that reason, limitations of Claim 4 are not contemplated by Murakami et al. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 4 of the claimed invention.

Claim 5. With regard to Claim 5, which depends from Claims 1 and 3, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claims 1 and 3 by reference. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 5 of the claimed invention.

Claim 6. With regard to Claim 6, which depends from Claims 1 and 3, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claims 1 and 3 by reference. In addition, the Examiner has characterized Whipp et al. as disclosing a system “wherein the key generation system stores a digital key on a storage device provided by a prospective renter (Page 5, Paragraphs 0053-0056).” (Office Action at 5) As previously discussed in connection with Claim 1 and elsewhere, however, the digital key of the claimed invention is not analogous to features suggested by Whipp et al., in large part because Whipp et al.

does not contemplate digital security devices capable of operating without a data link between the car and the outside. For that reason, limitations of Claim 6 are not contemplated by Whipp et al. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 6 of the claimed invention.

Claim 7. With regard to Claim 7, which depends from Claims 1, 3, and 6, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claims 1, 3, and 6 by reference. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 7 of the claimed invention.

Claim 8. With regard to Claim 8, which depends from Claims 1, 3, and 6, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claims 1, 3, and 6 by reference. In addition, the Examiner has characterized Murakami et al. as disclosing a system “wherein the digital key comprises car and user identification (ID) signed by the management system to authenticate the digital key (Col 11, lines 6-67 to Col. 12, line 22).” (Office Action at 6) As previously discussed, however, the digital key of the claimed invention is not analogous to features contemplated by Murakami et al., in large part because Murakami et al. does not contemplate digital security devices capable of operating without a data link between the car and the outside. For that reason, limitations of Claim 8 are not contemplated by Murakami et al. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 8 of the claimed invention.

Claim 9. With regard to Claim 9, which depends from Claim 1, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claim 1 by reference. In addition, the Examiner has characterized Murakami et al. as disclosing a system “wherein a renter of a car invalidates a valid digital key upon returning a car to the car rental system and presents an invalidated digital key to the key return system to complete a car return (Col 11, lines 6-67 to Col. 12, line 67).” (Office Action at 6) As previously discussed, however, the digital key of the claimed invention is not analogous to features

contemplated by Murakami et al., in large part because Murakami et al. does not contemplate digital security devices capable of operating without a data link between the car and the outside. As a result, Murakami et al. cannot be viewed as foreseeing the invalidation of digital keys, and limitations of Claim 9 are not contemplated by Murakami et al. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 9 of the claimed invention.

Claim 10. With regard to Claim 10, which depends from Claims 1 and 9, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claims 1 and 9 by reference. In addition, the Examiner has characterized Murakami et al. as disclosing a system “wherein a renter of a car invalidates a valid digital key upon returning a car to the car rental system and presents an invalidated digital key to the key return system to complete a car return (Col. 8, lines 24-64).” (Office Action at 6) As previously discussed in connection with Claim 9, however, neither the digital key of the claimed invention nor, by extension, the invalidation of a digital key, is analogous to features contemplated by Murakami et al. As a result, Murakami et al. cannot be viewed as foreseeing the invalidation of digital keys. For that reason, limitations of Claim 10 are not contemplated by Murakami et al. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 10 of the claimed invention.

Claim 11. With regard to Claim 11, the Examiner has characterized Murakami et al. as disclosing:

a computer implemented method for operating a car rental system comprising the steps of

accessing a reservation server by a prospective car renter to servers a car (See Murakami, Col. 6, lines 29-67 to Co. 7, line 63);

authenticating the prospective car renter by the reservation server (See Murakami, Col. 12, lines 23-67) and, upon the reservation server successfully authenticating the user, prompting the prospective car renter for the date, time, and location for pickup and return, and the type of car (See Murakami, Col. 8,

lines 65-67 to Col. 9, line 67; Col. 10, lines 1-67).

(Office Action at 6) The cited passages from Murakami et al., however, do not make reference to reservations but instead appear to contemplate a system in which subscribers to a shared vehicle system will be able to “obtain the use of a vehicle 16 [by] arriv[ing] at a first port facility 14 and enter[ing] a request for a vehicle and other information into a computer system.” (Murakami et al., column 6, lines 63-65) The disclosure of Murakami et al. does not provide for allocation of vehicles based on advance reservation but instead contemplates that subscribers will arrive at a “port” and wait for a vehicle to become available. Thus, the disclosure of Murakami et al. provides that various factors to be used in allocating vehicles, including *inter alia* “the number of individuals waiting for vehicles in the port, and the number of vehicles present in the port.” (Murakami et al., column 6, lines 56-62; Murakami et al., Figure 2)

The Examiner has recognized that “Murakami does not explicitly disclose checking by the reservation server an availability of a requested car and, if a car is available, creating by the reservation server a digital key by car and user information with a digital signature of the reservation server [*cf.* Claim 11, lines 7-9]; and downloading the digital key to a portable storage device, the portable storage device being used to gain access to a rental car [*cf.* Claim 11, lines 10-11].” (Office Action at 7) Recognizing the deficiencies of Murakami et al. in this regard, the Examiner has relied upon the disclosure of Whipp et al.:

Whipp suggests checking by the reservation server an availability of a requested car and, if a car is available, creating by the reservation server a digital key by car and user information with a digital signature of the reservation server (See Whipp, Page 5, Paragraphs 0050-0056)

(Office Action at 7) As discussed above in connection with Claim 1, however, Whipp et al. does not describe a digital key as used in the claimed invention. The system contemplated by Whipp et al. is not capable of releasing a car to an operator without the car’s first obtaining “authorization from the centralized data management system.” In

addition, Whipp et al. provide that, while use of its authorization system requires contact between the vehicle to be rented and a centralized data system, “[g]enerally, once rented, vehicles 12 will not contact the data system 14 until termination of the lease unless an emergency occurs.” (Whipp et al., Paragraph 0050) The claimed invention, by contrast, describes a digital key which does not require either a data link between a rental car and a central station or transaction-by-transaction reprogramming of a rental car’s reader (Specification, page 2, lines 15-20) and which may be employed by the operator to activate the car at any time throughout the rental period. (Specification, page 3, lines 4-11)

The Examiner further relies on Whipp et al. as suggesting the limitation of Claim 11 concerning the step of “downloading the digital key to a portable storage device, the portable storage device being used to gain access to a rental car (See Whipp, Page 5, Paragraphs 0050-0056)” The claim itself adds, “without communication between the rental car and the reservation server.” (Claim 11, lines 11-12) Applicants respectfully submit, however, that Whipp et al. does not suggest such limitation of Claim 11, in large part because Whipp et al. does not contemplate a digital key like the one employed by the claimed invention, as discussed in the preceding paragraph.

The Examiner has found that “[i]t would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to have included the features of Whipp within the system of Murakami with the motivation of providing a car rental system minimizing labor costs and local infrastructure support required to lease a vehicle from a remote site (See Whipp, Page 2, Paragraph 0015).” (Office Action at 7) Applicants, respectfully traverse however, traverse the Examiner’s findings that Whipp et al. and Murakami et al. have characteristics such as are attributed to them in the Office Action. Furthermore, even though it may be an object of Whipp et al. to provide “a car rental system minimizing labor costs and local infrastructure support required to lease a vehicle from a remote site” (Whipp et al., Paragraph 0015), the same is not the object of the claimed invention. The claimed invention addresses the problem of how to provide digital keys in

a manner that does not require either a data link between a rental car and a central station or transaction-by-transaction reprogramming of a rental car's reader. (Specification, page 2, lines 15-20) There is no reason to expect the problem addressed by Whipp et al. and the problem addressed by the claimed invention to have the same solution.

The Examiner admits that the characterization of lines 10-12 of Claim 11 omitted the important limitation, "without communication between the rental car and the reservation server." (Office Action at 7) Conceding that Murakami et al. and Whipp et al. do not disclose that important limitation, the Examiner relies on Rosenberg et al. to make up for the deficiency.

As previously discussed in connection with Claim 1 and elsewhere, however, the disclosure of Rosenberg et al. contemplates a digital key that does not require a data link between a rental car and a central station. While it appears to be the case that the system of Rosenberg et al. may be employed in a manner that eliminates need for communication between a *vehicle location system control center* and a *central computer*, it is clear that Rosenberg et al. does not eliminate the need for communication *from the car to a central computer*. To the contrary, the disclosure of Rosenberg et al. *would require data communication between a driver and a central computer* to initiate a data link involving a central station to determine whether the driver is authorized to use the car. (Rosenberg et al., Paragraph 0071; *see also* Rosenberg et al., Paragraph 0199 and Figures 1-7) The system of Rosenberg et al. provides that a driver may either (a) cause a central computer be put in communication with a vehicle location control center or (b) cause a parking code associated with a vehicle's current parking location to be communicated to a central computer. Claim 11 of the claimed invention, by contrast, enables the digital key to work without initiating a data link or other communication external to the car.

Applicants thus respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 11 of the claimed invention.

Claim 12. With regard to Claim 12, which depends from Claim 11, Applicants

hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claim 11 by reference. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 12 of the claimed invention.

Claim 13. With regard to Claim 13, which depends from Claims 11 and 12, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claims 11 and 12 by reference. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 13 of the claimed invention.

Claim 14. With regard to Claim 14, which depends from Claim 11, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claim 11 by reference. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 14 of the claimed invention.

Claim 15. With regard to Claim 16, which depends from Claim 11, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claim 11 by reference. In addition, the Examiner has characterized Whipp et al. as disclosing limitations involving various steps involving a “digital key.” (Office Action at 9-10) As previously discussed in connection with Claims 1 and 11 and elsewhere, however, neither the digital key of the claimed invention nor, by extension, the performance of steps involving such digital key, is analogous to features contemplated by Whipp et al. Limitations of Claim 15 are thus not contemplated by Whipp et al. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 15 of the claimed invention.

Claim 16. With regard to Claim 16, which depends from Claim 11, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claim 11 by reference. In addition, the Examiner has characterized Whipp et al. as disclosing limitations involving various steps involving a “digital key.” (Office Action at 9-10) As previously discussed in connection with Claims 1 and 11 and elsewhere, however, neither the digital key of the claimed invention nor, by extension, the performance of steps involving such digital key, is analogous to features contemplated by Whipp et al. Limitations of Claim 16 are therefore

not contemplated by Whipp et al. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 16 of the claimed invention.

Claim 17. With regard to Claim 17, which depends from Claims 11 and 16, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claims 11 and 16 by reference. The Examiner has again characterized Whipp et al. as disclosing limitations involving various steps involving a “digital key.” (Office Action at 10-11) As previously discussed in connection with Claims 1 and 11 and elsewhere, however, neither the digital key of the claimed invention nor, by extension, the performance of steps involving such digital key, is analogous to features contemplated by Whipp et al. As a result, limitations of Claim 17 are not contemplated by Whipp et al. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 17 of the claimed invention.

Claim 18. With regard to Claim 18, which depends from Claims 11, 16, and 17, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claims 11, 16, and 17 by reference. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 18 of the claimed invention.

Claim 19. With regard to Claim 19, which depends from Claim 11, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claim 11 by reference. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 19 of the claimed invention.

Claim 20. With regard to Claim 20, which depends from Claim 1, Applicants hereby incorporate the foregoing discussion of Claim 1 by reference. In addition, the Examiner has characterized Murakami et al. as disclosing a system “wherein each of said fleet of cars has a storage device for storing a record of the digital key (See Murakami, Col 11, lines 6-67 to Col. 12, line 67; Col. 13, lines 1-67).” (Office Action at 12) As previously discussed, however, the digital key of the claimed invention is not analogous to features contemplated by Murakami et al., in large part because Murakami et al. does

not contemplate digital security devices capable of operating without a data link between the car and the outside. For that reason, limitations of Claim 20 regarding the storage of a record of a digital key are not contemplated by Murakami et al. Applicants respectfully submit that a combination of Murakami et al., Whipp et al., and Rosenberg et al. would not result in Claim 20 of the claimed invention.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully requested that the application be reconsidered, that Claims 1-20 be allowed, and that the application be passed to issue.

Should the Examiner find the application to be other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to discuss any other changes deemed necessary in a telephonic or personal interview.

A provisional petition is hereby made for any extension of time necessary for the continued pendency during the life of this application. Please charge any fees for such provisional petition and any deficiencies in fees and credit any overpayment of fees to Attorney's Deposit Account No. 50-050.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael E. Whitham
Registration No. 32,635

Whitham, Curtis & Christofferson, P.C.
11491 Sunset Hills Road, Suite 340
Reston, VA 20190
Tel. (703) 787-9400
Fax. (703) 787-7557
Customer number: 30743